US Army Quartermaster Historical Center & School

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QUARTERMASTER COOK UNDER FIRE

When the 30th Infantry Regiment hit the beach at Anzio in January 1944, one of those to go ashore as a Quartermaster-turned-Infantryman, was the First Cook assigned to India Company – Tech 5 Eric G. Gibson.

In the months before, Specialist Gibson worked out a deal with his CO that whenever the company went into battle, he could serve as a rifleman in one of the Infantry squads and go out on patrol. But as soon as B-rations were available, he had to return to his regular duties in the kitchen. Under this arrangement, First Cook Gibson wound up leading a pack train across several miles of rugged mountainous terrain in Sicily. Later he served as the Company's number one scout, locating several enemy positions, and managed to kill one German soldier and wounded another in succeeding firefights. He continued with his dual missions – as Company Cook and Number One Scout – and repeatedly distinguished himself in combat along the Italian coastline, after the battle of Anzio.

Then on 28 January 1944, Tech 5 Gibson joined the ranks of the immortal. Around 1200 hours, near the village of Isola Bella, Italy, India Company came under withering enemy attack. Gibson, with a tiny squad of replacements rushed out to secure the unit's right flank – and in so doing, destroyed four enemy positions, killing 5 and capturing 2 Germans. He then went out a full 50 meters in front of the squad, and running, leaping, dodging automatic weapons fire, he single-handedly knocked out another position with his machine-pistol.

He continued moving toward other bunkers, firing a submachine gun with almost every step forward, as enemy artillery began to zero in on his position. Nonstop automatic weapons rounds passed within inches of his body, yet he never paused in his forward movement. He crawled much of the last 125 meters right through a concentrated artillery and small arms barrage, and dropped two hand grenades into a German machinegun emplacement – killing two more and wounding another. And was in one final face-to-face engagement when an enemy round finally cut him down.

For his conspicuous gallantry and **COURAGE** under fire, Tech 5 Gibson was awarded the Medal of Honor – one of 33 Quartermasters to receive that high honor.

QUARTERMASTER COURAGE AT ANZIO

Quartermasters know that not all the fighting and dying is done in front-line foxholes. A lot of them learned that in Italy, more than fifty years ago. Ernie Pyle, the famous World War II correspondent, had heard all the typical jibes about Quartermaster soldiers being immune from combat. But when he covered the Allied landing on the beaches of Anzio, in January 1944, he got a firsthand look at the role Quartermaster soldiers played in the real world. And saw for himself repeated examples of QM **COURAGE** and devotion to **DUTY** on the battlefield.

Previously it was assumed that Quartermaster technicians remained in the rear, far removed from harm's way. But as soon as he climbed ashore, Ernie quickly learned otherwise. "Up here on the beachhead," he wrote, "they are blowing that tradition all to hell. The Quartermaster Corps has been under fire ever since the beachhead was established and still is." And he couldn't help notice they were taking heavy casualties, right along with the Infantrymen they were sent there to support.

Looking up and down the beach, he saw Quartermasters delivering rations to frontline foxholes over rugged, zeroed-in terrain. And witnessed graves registration units burying the dead under heavy enemy bombardment, and taking refuge in the open graves when the rounds got too close.

QM Petroleum specialists had it particularly rough. One POL officer on the scene later wrote: "If you really want a Roman holiday, try to picture yourself issuing gas to one outfit, fighting a fire in another area, pumping gas from 55-gallon drums into 5-gallon containers, and, at the same time, dodging shells as they come in: Keeps one rather busy just staying alive, let alone supplying an army."

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DUTY, SERVICE, AND SACRIFICE

On January 15, 1991, the soldiers of the 14th Quartermaster Detachment, a water purification unit out of Greensburg, Pennsylvania, was mobilized for duty in the Gulf War – just one day prior to the initiation of air strikes against Baghdad. They spent the next 30 days at Fort Lee, learning to use the newest and most advanced water purification equipment, before arriving in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia on February 19th. The next six days were spent on continued training, in preparation for movement to the field.

On the evening of the seventh night in country, the men and women of the 14th QM Detachment were relaxing in their temporary home, contemplating what the future might hold. At approximately 8:30 P.M. an Iraqi Scud missile slammed into their quarters, with truly horrendous effect. Amid the rubble lay 28 dead Americans, 13 from the 14th Quartermaster Detachment. An additional 43 soldiers suffered grievous injuries. The survivors returned home in March to a hero's welcome. The Chief of Staff of the Army, General Gordon R. Sullivan, later said:

> "The soldiers of the 14th were not battle-hardened warriors. On the contrary, they were in a unit whose mission was to preserve life by purifying water. The product of their labors would have sustained life. This quality – the ability to have compassion, the desire to help others – is the true essence of our nation."
>
> "And the 14th Quartermaster Detachment has become a symbol of the broader sacrifice of our nation for what we believe. We must remember, heroism is not measured only by bravery in battle. Heroism is measured as well by a **WILLINGNESS TO SERVE**, is realized in the striving, and is proven by the risk of being in harm's way when you are most vulnerable."
>
> "Make no mistake. The soldiers occupying a barracks in far-off Dhahran . . . especially those who made the supreme sacrifice, are heroes. . . . They answered the call of **DUTY**. They paid the ultimate price for freedom."

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WWII QUARTERMASTERS LIBERATE FRENCH TOWN

The course of World War II changed dramatically on D-Day, June 6th, 1944, as tens of thousands of Allied soldiers hit the beaches at Normandy. There they remained tied up for nearly six weeks in the infamous French hedgerows before they were able to break out, and meet the Germans head-on.

At the end of July, General Patton's "Thundering Third" Army knifed through the Nazi defenses on an historic dash towards Paris. Armored divisions led the way. But right behind them were elements of the 514th Quartermaster Group, including some 50 QM truck companies hauling troop replacements, rations, and thousands of jerricans of gasoline – to keep Patton's army moving.

In the weeks that followed, Quartermaster truckers worked around the clock. They often had to make their long, dangerous supply runs through enemy-infested territory in total darkness, with only a small escort of tanks. They were routinely subjected to enemy air and artillery attacks. Took many casualties. And at times literally had to "dismount" and fight right alongside their Infantry passengers – until the mopping up was complete. Practically all the drivers pointed proudly at bullet holes in the cabs or windshield of their vehicles.

Thus it came as no surprise to learn that a couple of Quartermasters from the 514th managed to liberate a French town along the way. MAJ Charles Ketterman, QMC, and his jeep driver, Tech 5 Ernest Jenkins, both with the 35th Infantry, entered the crossroads town of Chateaudun on the road to Paris. They believed it had already been liberated.

A hail of machine-gun fire told them otherwise. Armed only with a .45 pistol and an 103 rifle, the major and his driver staged an 8-hour "battle" of their own. When it was over, they discovered they had killed three Germans, wounded several more, knocked out a gun position, and had scared the entire garrison except fifteen diehards into evacuating the town. Then they proceeded to capture those fifteen! That day the two Quartermasters were the toast of the 35th Infantry. And General Patton ("Old Blood-and-Guts" himself) thought enough of the two soldiers' **COURAGE** and devotion to **DUTY** that he personally awarded each a Silver Star.

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DUTY AT ANTIETAM

When the American Civil War broke out in the spring of 1861, boys on both sides of the Mason-Dixon Line, caught up in patriotic enthusiasm rushed to join the Union and Confederate armies.

In June of that year, 18-year-old William McKinley quit his job as a postal clerk in Poland, Ohio, and enlisted as a private in Company E, of the Twenty-third Ohio Volunteer Infantry – a unit destined to become one of the most famous in the war. It fought in 19 battles and lost a total of 2,095 members – 169 killed in combat and another 107 died of wounds and disease.

Before his first year of service had ended, young McKinley was promoted to Commissary Sergeant. On September 17, 1862, at the Battle of Antietam – the bloodiest day of the Civil War, in fact the bloodiest day in American military history – Sergeant McKinley was just to the rear of the battlefield watching over the brigade's food and supplies. The men had eaten only a scanty breakfast, and he knew that as the day wore on the Buckeyes were growing weaker.

After gathering up a hand full of stragglers, Sergeant McKinley courageously led two mule teams with wagons of rations and hot coffee into the thick of battle. Working his way over rough ground, through a hailstorm of artillery and rifle fire, he ignored repeated warnings to retreat – and continued on. He lost one team of mules to Confederate gunners, but did not return to the rear of the brigade until his fellow soldiers had been properly fed under the most adverse conditions.

He earned that day the undying gratitude and respect of his comrades. "From Sergeant McKinley's hand," said the Commander afterwards, "every man in the regiment was served with hot coffee and warm meats, a thing which had never occurred under similar circumstances in any other army in the world."

For his coolness under fire, outstanding bravery, and attention to **DUTY,** young McKinley was that same week promoted to second lieutenant. By war's end he was a major – and thirty years later became President of the United States.

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SELFLESS SERVICE

On a Saturday night, January 28th, 1921, hundreds of movie-goers took their seats in the well-known Knickerbocker Theater in downtown Washington D.C. and waited for the evening's entertainment to begin. Few were aware that outside a blizzard had begun. One of the worst snowstorms in the history of our nation's capital. As the evening wore on the snow continued to mount, more than three feet deep, with shoulder-high drifts stopping all traffic.

Then suddenly without warning the roof gave out a loud creak and came crashing down upon the audience – carrying the balcony with it, and burying men, women, and children under tons of concrete, steel, plaster, and snow. Leaving 98 dead and more than a 150 injured.

As bad as it was, the toll would have been far worse, the suffering much greater ... had it not been for the quick response and **SELFLESS SERVICE** of Quartermaster personnel stationed in the District of Columbia.

The frantic call for help went out around midnight. Minutes later, Captain C. W. Hoover, US Army Quartermaster Corps, responded by leading a 5-truck convoy through the treacherous snow-covered streets of Washington. Upon arrival at the scene of disaster, he and his QM drivers immediately set about rescuing the scores of dead and dying victims trapped below. They continued their efforts untiringly for the next 36 hours – and were credited with saving many lives.

Days later, the District Commander, in a letter to The Quartermaster General, praised the Quartermaster Corps for the "splendid service" rendered by Captain Hoover and his troops. And concluded by saying: "It must be to you a cause of much gratification that all of the members of your Corps upheld in such a fine manner the traditions of the United States Army."

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WWI QUARTERMASTER SERGEANT AWARDED D.S.C.

In the spring of 1917, the U.S. Government declared war on Germany. Several new camps opened (including Camp Lee, Virginia) and tens of thousands of troops began training for duty on the Western Front in Europe. It was called "The Great War" back then, or "The War to End All Wars." But we know it today as World War I.

Armies in Europe fought on a scale never before seen. And introduced a range of new weapons, like: submarines, machine guns, long range artillery, poison gas, and airplanes. Trench fighting at its worst (such as the Battle of the Somme, or Verdun) resulted in upwards of 20,000 deaths – *in a single day*. That's what Quartermaster soldiers faced when they joined the Allied Expeditionary Force to France in 1918. Many experienced the shock of battle firsthand, and responded with both **COURAGE** and **INTEGRITY**.

Take, for example, the case of Sergeant Laurence M. Lumkin, assigned to a Quartermaster Pack Train, supporting the 1st Infantry Division (the "Big Red One") near the little French village of Exermont. On October 4th, 1918, Sergeant Lumpkin's pack train was loaded down with barbed wire and other badly needed barrier material, on their way to the front. Suddenly, without warning, German batteries opened fire, and all hell broke loose. Caught in the open and easily visible to the enemy, they began receiving machine gun and sniper rounds as well. Killing almost instantly five of the ten mules in his pack train.

Even the hardiest doughboy might have been forgiven for retreating under such trying conditions. But the Quartermaster NCO refused to say quits. He knew how desperately the wire was needed up ahead. So he rallied his troops and pushed on. Through the killing zone right up to the front, where they were warmly received. Having survived what few others would have even attempted, Sergeant Lumpkin, later in the same day made a return trip. Packed another load of barrier material and ran that terrible gauntlet of enemy fire a *second* time

For his extraordinary heroism that day, Sergeant Lumpkin was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross -- the second highest honor that can be won in combat.

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SERVICE AND THE BERLIN BLOCKADE

In June 1948, the Soviet high command closed all land and water communication between Allied-occupied West Germany and the now divided city of Berlin. The blockade caught world leaders by surprise, and threatened with starvation the estimated two million German civilians and 8,000 plus Allied troops stationed in West Berlin.

To meet this emergency, the British and Americans collaborated in setting up and maintaining what became known as the Berlin Airlift. For nearly thirteen months, until the blockade was lifted, the United States Army and Air Force accomplished the stupendous task of transporting by air all of the food, clothing, fuel, and other supplies necessary to maintain the population of the isolated area. This was an unprecedented feat in world history.

Quartermaster personnel in Germany, operating under the direction of Major General George A. Horkan, went into high gear, collecting whole warehouses full of life-sustaining goods of every kind needed to keep the beleaguered city afloat. Enormous stockpiles of goods went from QM depots in West Germany to the two principal U.S. airfields in Rhein-Main and Wiesbaden. There they were put on board the endless rows of C-47s and C-54s waiting to carry their precious cargo through the tiny corridor over East Germany, to Quartermaster soldiers waiting to unpack them on the other end at West Berlin's Tempelhof airfield.

More than 23,000 tons of Quartermaster supplies were flown into West Berlin during the course of the first twelve months of the Airlift. Quartermasters provided the fuel – more than 600,000 gallons of gas each day – to keep the planes in the air around the clock. Other items ranged from food to forklifts, from typewriters to millions of pounds of scrap canvas, and from office furniture to baby clothes.

On Easter Sunday, April 16, 1949, the Allies achieved a record of 1,398 flights – nearly one flight a minute for a full 24 hours – and delivered nearly 13,000 tons of goods to the Berliners. Not long after that the Soviet Blockade was lifted. "OPERATION VICTUALS was one of the early victories of the Cold War. **SELFLESS SERVICE** on the part of Quartermaster soldiers proved to be one of the keys to victory.

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ORIGIN OF THE HAND SALUTE

No one knows the precise origin of today's hand salute. From earliest times and in many distant armies throughout history, the right hand (or "weapon hand") has been raised as a greeting of friendship. The idea may have been to show that you weren't ready to use a rock or other weapon. Courtesy required that the inferior make the gesture first. Certainly there is some connection between this old gesture and our present salute.

One romantic legend has it that today's military salute descended from the medieval knight's gesture of raising his visor to reveal his identity as a courtesy on the approach of a superior. Another even more fantastic version is that it symbolizes a knight's shielding his eyes from the dazzling beauty of some high-born lady sitting in the bleachers of the tournament.

The military salute has in fact had many different forms over the centuries. At one time it was rendered with both hands! In old prints one may see left-handed salutes. In some instances the salute was rendered by lowering the saber with one hand and touching the cap visor with the other.

The following explanation of the origin of the hand salute is perhaps closest to the truth: It was a long-established military custom for juniors to remove their headgear in the presence of superiors. In the British Army as late as the American Revolution a soldier saluted bv removing his hat. But with the advent of more cumbersome headgear in the 18th and 19th centuries, the act of removing one's hat was gradually converted into the simpler gesture of grasping the visor, and issuing a courteous salutation. From there it finally became conventionalized into something resembling our modern hand salute.

As early as 1745 (more than two-and-a-half centuries ago) a British order book states that: "The men are ordered not to pull off their hats when they pass an officer, or to speak to them, but only to clap up their hands to their hats and bow as they pass."

Whatever the actual origin of today's hand salute, clearly in the tradition of the US Army it has always been used to indicate a sign of **RESPECT** – further recognition that in the profession of arms military courtesy is both a right and a responsibility of every soldier.

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QM COURAGE IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC

On 20 October 1944, after nearly four hours of heavy naval bombardment to soften up Japanese defenses, United States Army forces emerged from landing craft and poured across the beaches of Leyte. Within hours of the landing, General Douglas MacArthur waded ashore in the company of the 24th Infantry Division, and made his dramatic announcement: "People of the Philippines, I have returned!" It was the beginning of the end of the war in the Pacific. But much hard fighting lay ahead.

Early in 1945, the Japanese staged a counter-attack on the coastal town of Palo, which happened to be where the 24th Division's Quartermaster Company was set up. The Japanese were hoping to destroy the trucks and Quartermaster supplies stored there. Many in the company were sorting supplies in a flimsy wooden building when they heard firing a few blocks to the south. Then the enemy, disguised as local Filipinos, set up a machine gun in front of the building and opened fire on a nearby Infantry regimental CP.

The Japanese had infiltrated in force, and a few had gotten to the Company's motor pool and Class III supply point. There was the smell of gasoline. Then flames erupted.

PVT James A. Denoff grabbed a blanket and ran outside through the enemy fire toward a flaming truck. A Japanese soldier blocked his path, but Denoff clubbed him to death and reached the truck, where he smothered the fire with his blanket. Then gave first aid to two other members of the company who had been wounded while defending the motor pool.

PFC Theodore C. Sharpe, left the building with Denoff and opened fire on the Japanese machinegunners. He killed one and forced the others to flee. Sharpe then volunteered to accompany the commander of the nearby regiment, who had left his CP without a guard, to cross a nearby bridge. On the way, Sharpe killed his second enemy soldier.

At the bridge they were joined by PVT Wladyslaw E. Swarter, another Quartermaster soldier. Swarter rescued a wounded GI on the riverbank, and after dragging him to safety, single-handedly killed an enemy sniper – then returned to cover the regimental commander and his escort until they could get across the bridge.

All three Quartermasters – Privates Denoff, Sharpe, and Swarter – showed they were tactically as well as technically prepared ... and had both the know-how and the **COURAGE** to act.

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QM SUPPORT IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC

Action-packed movies have been made, books written, and a great deal of attention given to combat units – Army and Marine "grunts," in particular -- who scrambled ashore to secure World War II beachheads against intense enemy fire. But relatively little is said of the Logistics Warriors who had to put supplies on those very same fire-swept beaches, often at the same time. Or right after the first wave of infantrymen went into action.

The assault is only part of the challenge. As soon as a lodgment is made, the new challenge is *sustainment* – making sure the attackers have enough food, fuel, supplies, arms and equipment, and vital field services that will enable them to hold on to the precious territory once gained, and fend off the expected enemy counterattack.

Combat soldiers in the island hopping South Pacific campaign in World War II carried with them a limited amount of C- and K-rations (much like today's MREs), ammunition, water, and personal supplies for immediate use. But after the first few hours of an over-the-shore assault, supplies and equipment would begin to run low, and "Fighting Quartermasters" were looked to open a logistics lifeline.

A fine example of World War II-style Quartermaster **COURAGE** under fire comes from an account written by an Infantry officer who went ashore as part of a South Pacific area task force, and faced intense Japanese counter-assaults. Of the Quartermasters assigned to support the assault, he wrote:

> [They] . . . "were right at our heels and were in there pitching from the moment we landed on the beach. They established a base, posted guards to help fight off air attacks, and proceeded with the business of keeping us going."
>
> "In less than two days they had a bakery in operation; within a week we were getting dehydrated and canned food in plentiful amounts. They soon had a refrigeration plant in operation and then we had fresh meat. They not only took care of themselves from a fighting standpoint but had food and clothing for us when we needed it most."

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QUARTERMASTER COURAGE . . . AT SEA

A Logistics Warrior by the name of **HENRY J. McGRATH** earned a Distinguished Service Cross in World War I for acts of extraordinary heroism -- not on land, but at sea.

McGrath, a resident of Jacksonville! Florida, when he entered the military, was a second lieutenant, Quartermaster Corps, assigned to the U.S. Transport Service at the time he won the DSC.

The transport service had chartered a steamer, the *Amphion*, and it was upon her fire-swept decks that this Quartermaster soldier showed remarkable **COURAGE**. The citation reads, in part:

> "When the *Amphion* encountered an enemy submarine on the high seas on October 12, 1918, Lieutenant McGrath in the face of heavy enemy shellfire took charge of and directed the laying of fire hose along the deck, extinguished a fire which had been started by an exploding shell."
>
> "Exposing himself to exploding shells and without regard for his personal safety, he carried a wounded seaman across the shell-swept deck to a place of safety. During the entire engagement, which lasted an hour and twenty minutes, this officer displayed great coolness, going from place to place about the ship and encouraging the crew at a time when encouragement was sorely needed. His coolness, and the effective manner in which he gave orders, inspired everyone and greatly aided the escape of the *Amphion*."